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REASONS

OFFERED TO THE CONSIDERATION

OF THE

CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES,

IN FAVOR OF THE REMOVAL

OF THE

SEAT OF GOVERNMENT,

FROM

WASHINGTON CITY,

TO

PHILADELPHIA.

1865

REASONS

FOR A

REMOVAL OF THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, February 2d, 1808.

On a motion made by Mr. Sloan, and seconded, that the House do come to the following resolution: *Resolved*, That it is expedient, and the public good requires, that the seat of government be removed to Philadelphia, for —— years; and that a committee be appointed to bring in a bill for that purpose:

The supporters of the afore said resolution, offer to the consideration of the citizens of these United States, the following reasons in support thereof.

1st. Because establishing a permanent seat of government at any place, is not authorised by the constitution; but contrary thereto—the most essential reason given for forming it was, "to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity". And the 4th section of the 4th article begins with this positive injunction: "the United States shall guarantee to every state in this Union, (and consequently to every citizen) a republican form of government": whereas, by cutting off part of two states, to form the District of Columbia, a large number of citizens are deprived of representation, that inestimable right and privilege of freemen. Query, is not every member of Congress bound by the oath he has taken to support the constitution, to recede the said district to the states of Virginia and Maryland, and thereby restore to the citizens their rights gauranteed to them by the constitution aforesaid——but opposed to the foregoing, is the 17th paragraph of the 8th section of the 1st article of the constitution as follows, "To exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever, over such district (not exceeding ten miles square) as may by cession of particular states, and the acceptance of Congress, become the seat of the government of the United States; and to exercise like authority over all places purchased by the consent of the legislature of the state in which the same shall be, for the erection of forts, magazines, dock-yards, and other needful buildings," here the reader will remark, that in the former quotation, the rights and liberties of the people are positively gauranteed to them; in the latter, a bare permission to take them away; the former consistent with our declaration of independence, and the inherent rights of man; the latter admitting of a monarchical despotism utterly repugnant thereto.—But the word permanent not being in the constitution, the law declaring the seat of

government permanently fixed in the city of Washington, cannot be binding on a future Congress; there being no constitutional power given to one Congress, to compel the next to sit in any place by them appointed: their power terminating with the time for which they were elected, their successors have an equal right to remove, and sit in any place which they think more beneficial to their constituents, and more convenient to themselves.

2d. Because the President having the appointment of all officers in the district, and the direction of the expenditure of immense sums of money drawn from the Treasury of the United States, creates an influence, and dependence on the executive, dangerous to the liberty, and independence of the union.

3d. Because it creates a heterogeneous system, repugnant to the principle of self government—deprives a number of citizens of their republican form of government gauranteed by the constitution—transforms them into servile dependants on the executive, and public treasury—and finally, renders their interest not barely separate from, but opposed to the general interest of the states; it being their interest to draw from the treasury as much money as possible, and expend it within the district, to increase their power, and influence, who, as before mentioned, being transformed from freemen, into servile dependants, must be dangerous to the liberty of the union, in proportion to their number, power, and influence.

4th. Because it is inconsistent with the principle of a free government, and dangerous to the liberties of the people, for their representatives to legislate in a district where the interest of its inhabitants is opposed to that of their constituents; and consequently where the whole weight of influence and intrigue, is on one side, and that contrary thereto.

5th. Because it is surrounded by an old, worn out, impoverished country, thinly inhabited by freemen, but abounding with slaves; from which circumstance, provision must always remain dear, and of an inferior quality—and, from its contiguity to large navigable waters, and the numerous slaves, who from their situation must always remain enemies, liable from hopes of obtaining freedom, to join external, or internal enemies, by which means it might fall an easy prey to either.

6th. Because it is inconveniently situated for Congress, or heads of departments to receive intelligence either foreign or domestic, the roads for a considerable distance being extremely bad, the travelling expense, and living at the city so high, that a citizen from a distant state, having a just claim on the United States, (unless it is very large) had better stay at home and lose it, than risque the enormous expense of coming to the seat of government, and staying as long as claimants are usually obliged to stay to support their

claims ; hence, few except inhabitants of the city, rich speculators, office hunters, or subtle intriguers (frequently sent and supported by parties in different parts of the union) have a chance of hearing, and seeing, the conduct of the representatives ; which ought to be exposed in as public a manner as possible, to free, unbiassed, and independent citizens, and consequently in a place cheap, and easy of access, and where their necessary business collects the greatest number of free inhabitants.

7th Because, after fifteen years futile attempt to counteract the decrees of God and nature, and expending ten, or fifteen millions of dollars (as Mr. Lewis declared in his speech against removal) to force into existence a city—in the recess of Congress, it wears the appearance of a number of deserted, decaying villages ; and because agreable to the calculation of some of the best calculaters in the United States that have attended the general government both at New-York, and Philadelphia, there is an annual loss sustained of more than half a million of dollars.

8th Because, the changes of weather are so frequent, and so violent, that none but the most robust and hardy members, are able regularly to attend their duty in the house ; hence the necessary absence from indisposition, greatly retards the business—nor is indisposition all, the United States have to deplore the loss of more members in one session of Congress in the city of Washington, than in ten years in the city of Philadelphia.—In New-York Congress sat 1 year 2 months and 2 days, (including two summers) in which time one member died.—The seat of government was in Philadelphia 10 years, in which time Congress sat 4 years 2 months and 2 days, in which time two members died.—The first session of Congress held in Washington, began on the 17th day of November 1800, from which time to the 28th day of January 1808, being 7 years, 2 months and 11 days, Congress having been in session 2 years 5 months and 17 days, in which time ten members died.

9th. Because, instead of consulting the convenience of members of the legislature, and officers of government in the erection of public buildings ; the interests of rich land-holders, and speculators have been consulted ; by which means, the President's house, and public offices, are fixed one and an half miles from Georgetown—the Capitol one and an half miles from said buildings, and the Navy Yard one mile from the Capitol—hence, it is evident that instead of an economical plan, to accommodate the legislature of the United States and officers of the general government conveniently, and with the least possible expense ; the reverse is the fact ; every feature of the plan exhibiting at the first view, indubitable proof of a design the most extravagant, absurd, and incommodious, that human genius could possibly invent—calculated for the express purpose, of

drawing not only from the public Treasury, but also from members of Congres, and other citizens, whose business might require a temporary residence in the city, as much money as possible, to be expended for the purpose of supporting, and increasing the number of servile dependants upon executive patronage ; who have in all ages, and civilized nations, been considered the most dangerous enemies to the rights and liberties of the people.

10th. Because, it is an insult to common sense to erect, and continue to expend immense sums of money on a Navy Yard 300 miles from the ocean, on the side of a mudhole, where the few vessels yet remaining rot nearly as fast as 300 men can repair them—where the transportation of timber costs as much as it is worth at Navy Yards at, or near the seaboard ; and in some instances more than it would have cost to have worked, and placed it in a vessel at Norfolk, from whence the principal part of the timber is brought —in a place where there is no foreign trade ; nor, from Alexandria, and Georgetown, being more conveniently situated, is there a shadow of probability there ever will—in a place where the guns, and great part of the cargo of a frigate when ordered to sea, must be carried fifty miles down the river, before the water is deep enough for her to float with them on board—where it takes such a frigate from two, to near three weeks to get from the Navy Yard to sea—where it has cost four thousand dollars to bring a frigate from the mouth of the river to her moorings at the aforesaid yard, which is filling up so fast, with the sediment of the muddy water, with little or no current to carry it off, that it is probable in a short time it will not be deep enough for a common merchant vessel—and finally, because taking into the account, the expense of the yard, and buildings annexed to it, and the advanced price of workmen and materials ; the total expense since its erection, must consequently have been double, if not threefold, what it would have been, had the business of the Navy Department been done at the Navy Yards previously the property of the United States.

11th. Finally, because taking a view of the whole plan, with the appurtenances thereunto belonging, and the consequences inseparable therefrom; it exhibits a system as contrary to the genuine principles of our government, as is the frigid to the temperate zone —insomuch that if a real whig of '76 possessing the primeval virtue and economy of the noble patriots that acquired our independence could be suddenly transported from a distant part of the Union, to the City of Washington, and there be presented with a Navy Yard 300 miles from the sea—a house erected for the President equal, if not exceeding in expense, and magnificence, the palace of an eastern monarch—and two massy piles of stone, which had been fifteen years putting together, under the names of

the north, and south wings of a Capitol to accommodate the legislature of the United States—that they had already cost near a million of dollars—that to complete them and fill up the space between, would probably cost two millions more—then cast his eyes upon the numerous unfinished, empty, and decaying buildings, and the surrounding worn out, and impoverished country—would he believe that rational beings had laid the plan?—Or that honest republicans had carried it on?—Would he believe that the wise, the virtuous, and economical *Jefferson*, and his supporters, had lavished away millions upon so absurd, extravagant, and hopeless a plan?—A plan to raise in the centre of a republic, costly monuments similar to those formerly erected in what is now termed the dark ages of the world, by tyrannical despots to perpetuate their crimes?

Would he not turn with disgust and indignation, from a scene so replete with evil consequences, and exclaim in the bitterness of his soul, Oh ye representatives of the people, who hath bewitched you, so soon to depart from the original, and genuine virtue, plainness, and economy of a republican government, to obtain, and establish which, I fought—I bled?—Hasten, Oh hasten, to retrace your steps, to close this pandora's box—cease to lavish away the revenue of the United States upon courtly sycophants, and to pay servile dependants for forging chains for me, and my posterity—leave, and consign to eternal infamy, those yet unfinished monuments of monarchical tyranny—let them henceforth be considered only as beacons, to warn our political mariners—let the tall trees of the forest grow around them—let them be speedily enveloped in the dark bosom of the wilderness, that the eyes of republican travellers may not be disgusted with the sight!—Remove with all possible speed, to a place where government can be administered upon genuine republican principles, and consistent with the interest and liberty, of your sovereigns, the people!

Reasons why the government of the United States ought to be administered at Philadelphia.

1st. Because, it is nearer the centre of population, and more convenient than any other city possessing the same advantages—that is to say, safety from both external, and internal enemies—convenient to information, both foreign, and domestic—surrounded with a rich country, thick settled with industrious free citizens, which abounds with provisions of the best quality, that supplies a market equal (if not superior) to any in the world—and from its central position between the great cities of New-York and Baltimore, renders it the most convenient, and beneficial place in the Union, for officers of government, members of Congress, and other citizens from distant parts of the United States, whose business

requires a temporary residence at the seat of government, to transact commercial, or other business.

2d. Because, the government of a great agricultural, and commercial nation, can be administered much cheaper, and more conveniently, in a city where an extensive commerce is carried on.

3d. Because, the constitutional sessions of Congress being held in the cold, and most changeable seasons, a city where members can be accommodated with clean, and dry pavements, to walk to and from their place of meeting, sheltered from storms, and the piercing blasts of winter, by continued ranges of buildings, has a tendency to preserve health and life, as experience hath incontestably proved in the statement exhibited in the 8th reason for removal—and by preserving health, would expedite the business of the legislature; and also, by a more general attendance of members, the business would be done with more propriety.

4th. Because, in the city of Philadelphia, every class of citizens, composing the legislature of the Union, and officers of government, might not only enjoy society agreeable to their various dispositions; but in the necessary intervals of relaxation from public business, exhilirate, and improve their minds, by attention to medical and other lectures, on the various arts and sciences; whereby their long separation from their near, and dear connections in life, would be rendered more tolerable.

5th. And finally, because, to prevent the baneful effects of intrigue, and improper influence, the business of the legislature, and government of the United States, ought to be transacted in the most public manner, amongst a free, and independent people—such are the citizens of Philadelphia—and such is the place where the seat of government ought to be.

The foregoing statement we conceived it our duty to lay before our constituents, and the citizens of the United States in general, leaving it to them to decide who are the genuine supporters of their rights and liberties—those who wish to destroy this germ of aristocracy in its infant state, and restore the citizens of the district to their inherent rights; or those who wish to continue lavishing away more than half a million of dollars annually, to support the said aristocratical plan, and thereby increase the number of dependants on executive patronage, and the public treasury.

N. B. In case of removal to Philadelphia, that city will provide convenient buildings for both houses of Congress, and the public offices, and give exclusive jurisdiction over them, as long as the seat of government remains there, with no other expense to the United States than keeping them in repair whilst they occupy them.